Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 GEORGE 02152 01 OF 02 302129Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------116283 302152Z /66
P 301725Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7126

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 2152

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, GY, US
SUBJECT: US-GUYANA RELATIONS IN THE POST-REFERENDUM PERIOD

REF: GEORGETOWN 1841

1. IT NOW SEEMS CLEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF FORBES BURNHAM AND IN THE CONTROL OF THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS WILL SUCCEED IN ITS QUASI-LEGAL EFFORT TO PROLONG ITS LIFE FOR ANOTHER TWO YEARS BY MEANS OF A CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM. IN THE FACE OF GOVERNMENT PRESSURE, THE OPPOSITION HAS BEGUN TO FRAGMENT AND THOUGH VARIOUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS ARE REINFORCED IN THEIR OPPOSITION, IT SEEMS OBVIOUS THAT NEITHER A LEGAL NOR A POLITICAL CHALLENGE WILL PREVENT THE HOLDING OF THE REFERENDUM SCHEDULED FOR JULY 10. ASSUMING THAT THE REFERENDUM CARRIES (AND NO ONE DOUBTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL INSURE THAT IT DOES CARRY), IT APPEARS THAT THE DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS OF THE CITIZENS OF GUYANA WILL BE LIMITED AND THEIR POLITICAL OPTIONS REDUCED FROM WHAT THEY HAD FORMERLY BEEN; BUT BECAUSE OF THE PROCEDURE USED THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO ARGUE THAT WHAT HAS HAPPENED WAS LEGALLY ACHIEVED.

2. THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS THAT GUYANA'S CONSTITUTION REQUIRED BE HELD NO LATER THAN OCTOBER 26, 1978
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 GEORGE 02152 01 OF 02 302129Z

--AND WHICH THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM IS DESIGNED TO DEFER--WERE ALWAYS PERCEIVED BY BURNHAM AND HIS GOVERNMENT AS A "PROBLEM." THE LAST ONES HELD IN 1973 HAD IN THE OPINION OF THE OPPOSITION AND OUTSIDE OBSERVERS BEEN BLANTANTLY RIGGED TO INSURE THE PNC WOULD HAVE A TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT. (IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECALL THAT THE OPPOSITION REFUSED FOR THREE YEARS

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

TO TAKE UP ITS SEATS IN PARLIAMENT FOLLOWING THE ELECTION, BUT EVENTUALLY DID, THEREBY LEGITIMATING THE BODY THE ELECTIONS HAD CREATED.) SINCE 1973, HOWEVER, THE POPULARITY OF BURNHAM AND HIS GOVERNMENT HAS OBVIOUSLY DECLINED DUE, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON, TO THE ECONOMIC DELRESSION IN WHICH GUYANA HAS FOUND ITSELF SINCE 1975. THE PARTY MACHINERY WHICH HAD "PRODUCED" THE TWO-THIRDS VOTE IN 1973 WAS NO LONGER FUNCTIONING NOR DID IT SEEM LIKELY THAT IT COULD BE PUT BACK IN ORDER IN TIME TO "ORGANIZE" PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN THE FALL OF 1978. BURNHAM THUS DECIDED ON THE DEVICE OF A CONSTITU-TIONAL REFERENDUM IN ORDER TO PROLONG HIS MANDATE AND, AS PREDICTED IN REFTEL, IT APPEARS THAT THE DEVICE WILL SERVE ITS PURPOSE: I.E., THE CONTINUATION OF POLITICAL CONTROL IN THE HANDS OF BURNHAM AND THE PEOPLE'S NATIONAL CONGRESS(PNC), FOR AT LEAST THE NEXT TWO YEARS.

3. CERTAINLY IN ITS CURRENT EFFORT TO SECURE APPROVAL FOR THE REFERENDUM, THE GOVERNMENT HAS CARRIED ON A CAMPAIGN WHICH MUST BE DESCRIBED AS SOMETHING LESS THAN HONORABLE. GOG SPOKESMEN FROM THE PRIME MINISTER ON DOWN HAVE VILIFIED THE REFERENDUM'S OPPONENTS AS "RUMOR MONGERS, REACTIONARIES, CAPITALISTS REMNANTS;" THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS BEING LED BY "EXPATRIATE PRIESTS" WITH "COLONIALIST MENTALITIES;" DOCTORS', LAWYERS' AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL GROUPS WHICH

SECRET

SECRET

OPPOSE HAVE BEEN DESCRIBED AS PEOPLE WHO WISHED TO PRESERVE THE "STATUS QUO" AND WHO WOULD FRIGHTEN AND FOOL THE PEOPLE WITH SUCH WORDS AND PHRASES AS "DEMOCRACY" AND "HUMAN RIGHTS." THE GOVERNMENT HAS SUPPRESSED ALL BUT THE BAREST MINIMUM PRESS COVERAGE OF OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES IN THE TWO GOVERNMENT-OWNED DAILIES (THE THIRD DAILY THE MIRROR BELONGS TO CHEDDI JAGAN'S MOSCOW-LINING PEOPLE'S PROGRESSIVE PARTY), WHILE AT THE SAME TIME GIVING LAVISH COVERAGE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S PRO-REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN. THE NATION'S TWO RADIO STATIONS HAVE BEEN EQUALLY DISCRIMINATING IN THE GOVERNMENT'S FAVOR IN THEIR COVERAGE. ATTEMPTS BY OPPOSITION GROUPS TO TAKE OUT PAID ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE PRESS OR ON RADIO HAVE BEEN TURNED DOWN BY THE GOVERNMENT AS BEING "UN-SOCIALIST."

4. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN RUMORS AND INSTANCES OF DARKER ACTIVITIES BY THE GOVERNMENT. AT LEAST ONE ANTI-GOVERNMENT RALLY WAS BROKEN UP BY "BULLY BOYS" RELIABLY REPORTED TO HAVE COME FROM THE PNC YOUTH ARM. THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SOFTENED ITS ANTI-REFERENDUM STANCE WHEN IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT THE APPROVAL OF IMPORT LICENSES IN

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

THE FUTURE MIGHT BE LINKED TO THE QUESTION OF WHO HAD
SUPPORTED OR OPPOSED THE GOVERNMENT ON THE REFERENDUM.
A FOREIGN MISSIONARY WHO HAD BEEN A MOTIVE FORCE BEHIND
THE OPPOSITION EFFORT OF THE GUYANA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
SUDDENLY RESIGNED LAST WEEK AS THAT BODY'S SECRETARY
ALLEGEDLY IN RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT PRESSURE.

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 GEORGE 02152 02 OF 02 302127Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------116273 302206Z /66
P 301725Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7127

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 2152

EXDIS

5. VOTING DAY IS NOW JUST OVER A WEEK OFF AND GEORGETOWN
IS ALIVE WITH RUMORS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL WIN THE
REFERENDUM WITH A "YES" VOTE OF ANYWHERE FROM 70 TO 80
PERCENT, USING PROXIES, AN OVERSEAS VOTE WHICH NO ONE IS
ABLE TO VERIFY, AND LOCAL VOTER LISTS CONTAINING A HIGH
INCIDENCE OF INDIVIDUALS LONG DEAD. BUT ANY LEGAL
CONSTATATION OF THESE CHARGES WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE
BECAUSE THERE IS NO OUTSIDE COMMISSION OBSERVING THE
VOTING NOR ANY INTERNATIONAL NEWS ORGANIZATION LIKELY
TO COVER IT EXCEPT THROUGH GUYANESE 'STRINGERS' WHO
ARE, AFTER ALL, CITIZENS EXPECTING TO GO ON LIVING HERE.
THUS, THE REFERENDUM POST MORTEM WILL PROBABLY BOIL DOWN
TO THE GOVERNMENT'S WORD VERSUS THAT OF THE OPPOSITION,
WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF AN UNFAIR ELECTION PRACTICES
SUIT BEING PURSUED BY THE OPPOSITION, WITH THE PROSPECT
THAT IT WOULD BE SPUN OUT FOR MONTHS AND YEARS INCON-
CLUSIVELY BEFORE THE COURTS.

6. THE INTERESTING MOMENT WILL COME WHEN THE REFERENDUM
IS OVER. THROUGH ITS SPOKESMAN THE GOVERNMENT HAS
INDICATED THAT THE EXISTING PARLIAMENT IS TO BE TRANS-
FORMED INTO A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY IF THE REFERENDUM IS
APPROVED. FOR THE NEXT FIFTEEN TO EIGHTEEN MONTHS THAT
BODY WILL LABOR TO PRODUCE A NEW CHARTER MORE IN KEEPING

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

WITH GUYANA'S "SOCIALIST THRUST" THAN THE EXISTING ONE.
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 GEORGE 02152 02 OF 02 302127Z

IN ITS WORK, THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WILL TAKE TESTIMONY
AND RECEIVE PETITIONS FROM A WIDE RANGE OF INDIVIDUALS
AND GROUPS. IF THE OPPOSITION GROUPS AGREE TO PARTICIPATE
IN THE DRAFTING OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION, THEY WILL, JUST
AS THEY DID AFTER THE 1973 ELECTION, BE LEGITIMATING
THE VOTE ON THE REFERENDUM, REGARDLESS OF HOW EXTRAVAGANTLY
IT MAY APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN RIGGED.

7. IN VIEW OF RECENT AND PROSPECTIVE POLITICAL DEVELOP-
MENTS HERE THE QUESTION ARISES AS TO WHETHER OR NOT
THEY DICTATE OR REQUIRE SOME CHANGE IN OUR POSTURE TOWARD
GUYANA, PARTICULARLY IN REFERENCE TO OUR REHABILITATED

AID PROGRAM, BRINGING IT TO THE POINT WHERE, IF THE
VARIOUS PROJECTS PLANNED FOR THIS FISCAL YEAR ARE
AGREED AND BEGIN TO MOVE, THE PROGRAM COULD APPROXI-
MATE $29,000,000. OUR PLANS FOR THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR
AND THE ONE THEREAFTER ENVISAGE A CONTINUATION OF OUR
AID PROGRAM AT REDUCED BUT STILL SIGNIFICANT LEVELS.
OUR PROGRAM, OF COURSE, HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO ACCORD
STRICTLY WITH THE CONGRESSIONAL MANDATE, IT IS HEAVILY
CONCENTRATED IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AND IS INTENDED
TO BENEFIT THE POOREST OF THE POOR.

8. OUR DECISION TO BECOME ACTIVE AGAIN ON THE DEVELOPMENT
SIDE IN GUYANA, TAKEN IN FULL KNOWLEDGE OF THE NATION'S
SOMEWHAT CHECKERED POLITICAL PAST, WAS BASED ON SEVERAL
ELEMENTS:
(A) GUYANA'S OBVIOUS NEED FOR DEVELOPMENTAL ASSISTANCE;
(B) AMB. ANDREW YOUNG'S VISIT TO GEORGEOWN IN AUGUST, 1977;
(C) THE CARIBBEAN INITIATIVE WHICH WAS TAKING SHAPE WITHIN
THE USG;
(D) A FEELING THAT THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 GEORGE 02152 02 OF 02 302127Z

USG AND GOG, WHICH HAD BEGUN TO DETERIORATE IN 1970 WITH
THE NATIONALIZATION OF SEVERAL ENTERPRISES INCLUDING
REYNOLDS ALUMINUM (1974), AS WELL AS THE ESTABLISHMENT
OF DIPLOMATIC AND ECONOMIC TIES WITH CUBA, AND HWE#
"BOTTOMED OUT" IN THE WINTER OF 1976-77, WAS ONCE AGAIN
IMPROVING DUE IN LARGE MEASURE TO A MORE PRAGMATIC
FOREIGN POLICY REPRESENTED BY FORMER FORMIN FRED WILLS.
THERE SEEMED REASON TO HOPE THAT GUYANA MIGHT BE MOVING

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

BACK FROM ECONOMIC POLICIES WHICH APPEARED BASED ON IDEOLOGY TO ONES WITH A MORE PRACTICAL FOUNDATION.

9. THE PREMISES ON WHICH WE BASED THE DECISION TO RESUSCITATE OUR AID PROGRAM IN THE SUMMER OF 1977 REMAIN, FOR THE MOMENT, ESSENTIALLY UNCHANGED FROM WHAT THEY WERE AT THE TIME. OBVIOUSLY, HOWEVER, WE MUST KEEP THEM UNDER CONTINUING REVIEW IN LIGHT OF GUYANA'S POLITICAL EVOLUTION, AS WELL AS ITS RATHER UNIQUE NON-ALIGNED FOREIGN POLICY, EXEMPLIFIED BY PRIMIN BURNHAM'S LONG AND CORDIAL VISITS TO RUSSIA, NORTH KOREA AND EAST GERMANY IN APRIL-MAY OF THIS YEAR, AS WELL AS THE BURGEONING AND MULTI-FACETED RELATIONSHIP THAT THE GOG ENJOYS WITH CUBA. UNTIL WE SEE CLEARLY WHERE BURNHAM AND HIS BRAND OF SOCIALISM ARE LEADING THE COUNTRY, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE MAINTAIN A PRESENCE AND AN AID INVOLVEMENT HERE AND THAT WE SIT QUIETLY BY CONTINUING TO DO JUST WHAT WE HAVE BEEN DOING AND IN A POSITION TO USE OUR INFLUENCE IN A POSITIVE AND HELPFUL WAY IF AN WHEN AN OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF. THAT, ESSENTIALLY, IS WHAT THE PRESIDENT SAID WE WOULD DO IN HIS LETTER TO PRIMIN BURNHAM DELIVERED ON JUNE 9.
BURKE

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.

SECRET

NNN

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978GEORGE02152
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780271-0636
Format: TEL
From: GEORGETOWN
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978064/aaaaaddu.tel
Line Count: 248
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: aca74685-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 GEORGETOWN 1841
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2282353
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US-GUYANA RELATIONS IN THE POST-REFERENDUM PERIOD
TAGS: PEPR, PINT, GY, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/aca74685-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014